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MARCH 14, 1950

# Town Meeting



BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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## How Can Organized Religion Advance American Democracy?

Moderator, **GEORGE V. DENNY, Jr.**

### Speakers

**CHARLES P. TAFT**

**NELSON GLUECK**

**GEORGE N. SHUSTER**

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### COMING

—March 28, 1950—

**What Kind of Farm Program Do We Need?**

—April 4, 1950—

**Should We Cut Marshall Plan Aid Now?**

Published by **THE TOWN HALL, Inc.**, New York 18, N. Y.

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 46  \$4.50 A YEAR: 10c A COPY



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### THE BROADCAST OF MARCH 21:

#### "What Should We Do About Federal Aid to Education?"



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The Broadcast of March 14, 1950, originated at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m., EST, over the American Broadcasting Company Network.

Town Meeting is published by The Town Hall, Inc., Town Meeting Publication Office: 400 S. Front St., Columbus 15, Ohio. **Send subscriptions and single copy orders to Town Hall, New York 18, N. Y.** Subscription price, \$4.50 a year. 10c a copy. Entered as second-class matter, May 9, 1942, at the Post Office at Columbus, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

# Town Meeting

BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

GEORGE V. DENNY, JR., MODERATOR



MARCH 14, 1950

VOL. 15, No. 46

## How Can Organized Religion Advance American Democracy?

### Announcer:

Tonight your Town Meeting is the guest of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, celebrating the 75th Anniversary of its founding in 1875 by Isaac Mayer Wise. Rabbi Wise was one of those great liberals who fled from the Hapsburg tyranny in Bohemia in 1846, and soon after came to this country and began work for the unification of American Jewry.

Last year, the Jewish Institute of Religion of New York, founded by Stephen S. Wise, was merged with Hebrew Union College under the presidency of Dr. Nelson Glueck. The institution is now known as Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, and works very closely with the University of Cincinnati, which was Town Meeting's first host in this city ten years ago.

Now to preside over our discussion, here is your Moderator, the president of Town Hall, and founder of America's Town Meeting, George V. Denny, Jr. Mr. Denny. (*Applause*)

### Moderator Denny:

Good evening, neighbors. It is most appropriate that we should discuss tonight's subject in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Hebrew Union College, as its founder, Isaac Mayer Wise, believed so deeply in the liberal tradition of American democracy. After the success of our program last fall on the subject, "Do Our Churches Offer a Sound Basis for Faith and Living?" it was inevitable that we should continue our discussion of a similar subject, so we're taking advantage of this occasion to consider the question, "How Can Organized Religion Best Contribute to American Democracy?"



History tells us of many types of religions and many types of democracies. But tonight, our question refers to organized religion in this country and our own particular brand of democracy, which is based upon your Judaic-Christian faith, which we call American democracy.

In time of stress, man invariably returns to religion as he is turning today for help and guidance to improve and preserve our way of life. So tonight we seek the counsel of three eminent leaders in the fields of religion and democracy. We hear first from Dr. George N. Shuster, president of Hunter College in New York City, and a prominent Catholic layman. Dr. Shuster. (*Applause*)

### **Dr. Shuster:**

What is a democracy? I believe it is a crowd of people who not only have vital everyday problems, such as, "Will I find a job?" or "How shall I bring up my children?" or "Must I go to war?" but also great deep hopes which from one point of view add up to Utopia, and from another to the Kingdom of Heaven.

People want to do good, but they are also likely to do evil. They long to pin their mortal selves to an immortal star, but they often cannot reach far enough. They desire a tombstone, but also words written on it, which will explain why they lived.

Some folk are admittedly bigger than others for a while, but seen in the perspective of birth and death, they are really pretty much the same size. To democracy, they are all equal under the law. To religion, they are alike because all are the children of God. They are, as Chesterton once said, "the million masks of God."

Now the fundamental question we face has become this: How can there be a law unless there is a law-giver, and how can there be children except there be also a Father? If the legislator be not God, then who shall we say he is? Perhaps Hitler or Stalin.

As soon as you say that the moral code has not been written on the hearts of all men by Someone not man, you indicate that nothing has been imprinted on any heart, and that here is the great chance for some chap with the gift for penmanship. But under his dictation men will no longer be equal. He will be the master and they the slaves. Then democracy will have died: as we have seen it die, tragically and wildly, over a great area of the earth.

Yet even more searching is this query: Is our human feeling justified that a man has dignity and worth because the purpose of his life is to receive affection?

We modern men may very well have found out how to blo

up the world. We know that we can kill a million people—possibly millions of people—in a single night. Can the one who might fall in the holocaust of so many still be sure that he is just not a digit, or a cipher, or a quantity of grease? And how without such certainty can the concept of democracy retain its meaning?

These are the questions which mankind is asking of religion, and I think the mission of church and synagogue is to answer by talking on the one hand the plainest kind of common sense, and on the other hand by doing—or trying to do—great, almost quixotic things for the healing of our world, such as the bridging of the gap between races and peoples.

Faith has such a high regard for reason that logic has from time immemorial been the sister of dogma. But faith is also vision, awareness, and responsibility. It says to the man of our time: Have you forgotten that someone was so scrupulously careful of human life, so passionately interested in every human being that he said to His servant, Moses, "No one should kill, or be angry, or covet his neighbors' goods"?

Faith never ceases to underscore what it was given to Isaiah to utter, and what Christ said on the Mount: that not the persecutor but the persecuted is blessed, that the merciful alone shall find mercy, and that only the eyes of the clean of heart shall not be dimmed.

Religion is, therefore, strong because it knows the good, but it is convincing also because it has looked into the heart of evil. And so it knows that its child, democracy, has often, alas, been greedy, selfish, given to gusts of passion, illiterate, and unfeeling. Even so, democracy is the child, as no slave society could ever be. It must hope that the words of its parent, religion, will be wise, understanding, and warmhearted. It must assume that there will be no mere barren contentiousness in the household of faith, but love, which alone can create freedom and power and the knowledge of truth. (Applause)

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Dr. Shuster. We'll hear next from Cincinnati's own Charles P. Taft, former president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, a distinguished attorney, and member of the City Council of Cincinnati. Mr. Taft. (Applause)

**C. P. Taft:**

Tonight, it is our job, we three, to put more meaning into the words "democracy" and "religion." I have no business to talk and



permit the words that I use to evaporate like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, just leaving a smile in the air.

You've heard Dr. Shuster give his stimulating analysis of democracy. Now democracy, to me, means the way a bunch of different people in a group, working on a hard problem, talk and listen and think and, finally, come to a common mind and to united action, and perhaps decision of differences by a vote of a majority. Perhaps one of them is boss and has the final say, but that is still democracy if that one has sense enough to know that his organization will not work without the backing of the common agreement. Democracy is the way each person thus participates.

To make that process work, organized religion is essential.

To begin with, that process in its modern form grew out of organized religion, in the Puritan Revolution in England of the 1640's—three hundred years ago. The oldtime insight of the Prophets, Dr. Glueck, was revived over 2,000 years later in the conviction of each member of the little independent religious congregations, like the Baptists and Quakers, and one particularly called the Levellers, that he could seek and find God in his own conscience, and was under a personal duty to speak and to do His will. The congregations finally settled their own affairs, after discussion, by a majority vote as probably closest to God's will.

But it was only so if there had been real discussion and a common general purpose in a religious spirit of friendliness. Here is what Oliver Cromwell said about it in those same debates of 1647:

"That we may seek God together, and see if God will give us a uniting spirit."

Organized religion is also most responsible, surely, for our ideal of equality, whatever in some periods, even our own, churches may do in the other direction.

These same little independent congregations of 1647 were poor and very much of a minority in their nation, but they were sure that God was no respecter of persons.

"The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the richest he," said Colonel Rainboro. They claimed that any man with breath and being had the right to vote, and they asserted forty years before John Locke, that no man should be under a government save by his own consent. There they had the authentic ideal of democracy.

They were claiming the kind of equality which came directly from them into the Declaration of Independence. That's what Lincoln was talking about in his Dred Scott speech when he said that the authors of the Declaration "meant to set up a standard maxim for free society . . . constantly looked to . . . and ever

though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and constantly . . . augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere."

Organized religion has another contribution to make. If it drives us—as it should—to seek God's will and to do it, we must recognize that other sincere seekers may sometimes be seeking God's will, too. That can only be effective if we have, as Sir Norman Angell puts it, a sense of the fallibility of our own judgment.

Changes we have to accept in democracy as necessary and desirable. To live under change, in peace and with profit, with our fellows we have to learn the kind of strength with humility which the Bible talks about—"Blessed are the poor in spirit; and Blessed are the meek."

Organized religion sets a standard of perfection to measure much of the material of our democratic processes. We are forced today to restudy what are the values in our culture and civilization that have brought us to greatness in this country. There the churches will find no processes, political or economic or social, that can pass the test 100 per cent.

Yet we know that our democracy has succeeded past other efforts because of ingenuity and know how, because we have a cult of hard work, because we take a chance and scrap what is old for something more efficient, because we insist on success in competition.

Now organized religion keeps us questioning, in these so-called values, the elements that are bad. It makes us seek reform, and it adds a basic necessity of democracy—generosity of spirit.

Those are the contributions of organized religion. If it were conceivable that you could take religion away from the history of man and modern democracy, we'd have to invent it to make democracy work. (Applause)

### **Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Charles Taft. Now we'll hear from another Cincinnati, the president of our host organization, Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion. Dr. Nelson Glueck is also a distinguished archaeologist whose discoveries have revolutionized the knowledge of Bible Lands in ancient times. He has written many books, the best-known of which is *The River Jordan*.

I take pleasure in presenting Dr. Nelson Glueck. (Applause)

### **Dr. Glueck:**

Everything that Dr. Shuster and Mr. Taft have said takes something for granted, which, despite our different religious affiliations, emphasizes our common bond as Americans, namely



an inseparable connection between the rights and rules applicable to all human beings, in accordance with the Moral Law about which Dr. Shuster spoke. That Law was once defined by a Rabbi in the following way: "Do not do unto others what you would not have others do unto you."

Shortly thereafter another Rabbi was to say: "Do unto others what you would have others do unto you."

Never, in the history of civilization, has there been a greater need for the expanding influence of organized religion, in our philosophies and systems of society and government than today. The discoveries of science can promote civilization, but the discoveries of science cannot save civilization, and, indeed, they very frequently threaten its very existence, if they are not ultimately employed in accordance with the teachings of religion.

We have a happy tradition here in America, a tradition of a free society and of a freely elected government, which we must safeguard and keep significant. That tradition stems back to the beginnings of our Republic and has been kept strong ever since. Our Founding Fathers called this country the New Jerusalem, because they conceived its constitution as being connected with the spirit of Sacred Scripture and of the Holy Land, and because of their desire to build America as a part of a spiritual Zion.

Organized religion must strive continuously to preserve here in America and restore elsewhere a spiritual climate in which equality of justice and freedom of opportunity and expression shall prevail for all. But, it must do so without invading in any way whatsoever the formal realm of government, by attempting to carry out the functions which properly must be left to the state.

We affirm that the principle of separation of church and state must continue stringently to be observed in our America. However, we also affirm that all of us—of any religion—have the right to urge, but never to coerce, or even attempt to compel others to believe as we believe, to persuade others to see issues as we see them, to worship as we worship.

We entertain the highest esteem for all those who seek adherents openly to their understanding of the Word of God. The important thing, as we see it, is: Let the Word of God be sought out.

I have often thought, how wonderful it would be if we organized in times of peace, in the same manner as in times of war, with the same devotion and the same self-sacrifice, to preserve and in every possible way to widen the areas of peace. That is the assignment of organized religion—to build the peace of brotherhood, and the brotherhood of peace—in times of peace.

We need radicals—radicals like Jeremiah and Jesus—to cham-



pion fearlessly the relationship of religion to life; to espouse, for instance, the admission of students and workers on the basis of equity and merit, alone, to our places of study and work; to combat prejudices wherever and whenever they appear.

We must keep sharp and clean the values of our spiritual inheritance, which underscore the American promise. Dr. Shuster quoted Isaiah. Isaiah said, "If ye have no faith, ye shall not endure," which we might paraphrase in the words, "Without faith, without organized religion, there will be no future for our American democracy and no survival for any government in the world."

Furthermore, however much our Government or any government may at any one time or period be compelled to make shift with compromises, the strivings of organized religion must be held up constantly before us and urge insistently upon us all the goals of the ideal society and the ideal government, whose laws derive their ultimate sanction from the concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. (*Applause*)

**Moderator Denny:**

Thank you, Dr. Glueck. Now while we get ready for our question period, here is a brief message for our Town Meeting listeners.

**Announcer:**

You are listening to the 603rd broadcast of America's Town Meeting of the Air, coming to you from Cincinnati, Ohio, where we are the guests of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion, discussing the subject, "How Can Organized Religion Advance American Democracy?"

If you'd like to obtain a copy of tonight's program and the next ten issues of our Town Meeting Bulletin, you may do so by sending \$1 to Town Hall, New York 18, New York. Single copies are available at 10 cents each, but in order to insure your not missing the next 10 broadcasts, 11 including this one, why not enclose \$1 for a trial subscription? Or you may receive this bulletin for an entire year for \$4.50.

Tonight we want to extend our congratulations to the Campfire Girls on their 40th birthday. They deserve the support of every American community, and we know you will do your share. Now for our question period, we return you to Mr. Denny.

# QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

*Mr. Denny:* Since we have three speakers, and we don't have our discussion around the mike, I'm going to take the liberty of starting the Question Period, Dr. Glueck, and remind you of a story I've told you before, to see if you have any answer to it.

Lincoln Steffens was walking down Fifth Avenue with the Devil—he tells it in his autobiography, you know—when he saw a merchant advertising pure truth for sale.

Steffens said to the Devil, "There's a man that'll put you out of business. He's selling pure truth to the public."

The Devil said, "Yes, he might, if I didn't know what to do about it."

"Ah," said Steffens, "but pure truth—that'll ruin you."

"Yes," said the Devil, "it might, but I know just what to do."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"I shall tempt man to organize it."

Who was right—Steffens or the Devil, Dr. Glueck?

*Dr. Glueck:* Why, of course, Steffens was right and the Devil was wrong. I know what we would do. We Catholics and Protestants and Jews would get together in real organization and we would exorcise the Devil. (*Laughter and applause*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Dr. Glueck. We might have a Town Meeting, too. There is a gentleman in the back of the hall who has a question for Mr. Taft, I believe.

*Man:* What if a congregation should democratically decide not to hear what its religion calls the truth and refuses to carry out such a program?

*Mr. Taft:* Well, in that case, which is one of the very difficult problems, I think the main question is whether the truth that the man wants to speak is that which is part of his service to his congregation. If it is something which is outside of his service to the congregation, the congregation may be right. If not, it's certainly wrong. (*Applause*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. The next man right here. Yes?

*Man:* I have a question for Dr. Shuster. I'm Michael Robinson from Mr. Denny's home town of Asheville, North Carolina. (*Laughter*)

*Mr. Denny:* It had better be good, Mr. Robinson. (*Laughter*)

*Mr. Robinson:* Dr. Shuster, is it not an historic fact that organized religion has more often than not stood in the way of social progress and democratic government? Examples of this are the Orthodox Church in Russia, the principle of divine right of

kings, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Church in Spain. (*Applause*)

*Dr. Shuster:* Yes, there's no doubt at all, Mr. Robinson, that organized religion has sometimes stood in the way of democracy. It has sometimes stood in the way of justice. It has also upon innumerable occasions been the great ally of justice and democracy. If, for example, we think only of one thing, and that is of the contribution which Christianity made to the development of all services for the care and welfare of the underprivileged and the sick during the period of transition from the Roman Empire—that is probably one of the best established facts in history, and to this, I might, if there were time, add some two or three thousand more. (*Applause*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Next question from the young lady.

*Lady:* I have a question for Dr. Glueck. Doesn't the contemporary world scene, with all its horror, prove the failure of organized religion? Hasn't it had 2,000 years, and failed?

*Dr. Glueck:* No, I don't think it's failed at all. As a student of history, I think that civilization is very young. The slime of our beginnings is practically still attached to our heels. I think we've made remarkable progress.



—International

***Our democracy guarantees freedom of religion.***



## THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

**CHARLES PHELPS TAFT**—Son of William Howard Taft, 27th President of the United States, and brother of Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio. Charles Taft was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1897. He has a B.A. degree and an LL.B. from Yale, and LL.D. degrees from the University of Toledo, University of Rochester, Marietta College, Miami University, and Ohio Wesleyan University.

Admitted to the bar in 1922, Mr. Taft started the practice of law with his brother Robert. From 1924 to 1937 he was a member of the firm of Taft, Stettinius & Hollister. In 1927-28 he was prosecuting attorney for Hamilton County, Ohio. He has been a member of the Cincinnati City Council, chairman of the National Committee on Community Mobilization for Human Needs, chairman of the Governor's Committee on County Government, and a member of the Provision Committee for the World Council of Churches. He is also a former president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

During the war, Mr. Taft was director of the U. S. Community War Services division of the Federal Security Agency from 1941 to 1943. He was director of Wartime Economic Affairs for the Department of State during 1944, and director of Transport and Communications Policy from 1944 until September 1945.

Mr. Taft is the author of *City Management—The Cincinnati Experiment, You and I—and Roosevelt*, and *Why I Am for the Church*.

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**NELSON GLUECK**—Dr. Glueck (glik), a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, is president of Hebrew Union College of that city. Degrees listed after his name include many: A.B., University of Cincinnati; R.H., and Rabbi, Hebrew College; student University of Berlin and Heidelberg University; Ph.D., University of Jena, Germany; Morgenthau Fellow American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem; LL.D., University of Cincinnati; D.H.L., Jewish Theological Seminary and Jewish Institute of Religion.

Dr. Glueck has been associated with Hebrew Union College since 1929 as assistant professor, associate professor, professor of Bible and Biblical archaeology, and, since 1947, as president. He has been a lecturer on Biblical literature at the University of Cincinnati, and professor at the American School of Oriental Research at Baghdad.

Dr. Glueck has several books on subjects related to archaeology and the Bible.

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**GEORGE NAUMAN SHUSTER**—Dr. Shuster has been president of Hunter College since 1940. He was born in Lancaster, Wisconsin, in 1894. He has an A.B. and an A.M. from Notre Dame; a Certificate d'Aptitude from the University of Poitiers, France; and a Ph.D. from Columbia. He has been a member of the faculties of Notre Dame, Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, and St. Joseph's College for Women.

From 1925 to 1929, Dr. Shuster was associate editor of *The Commonweal*; during the next eight years, managing editor; and now is contributing editor. He is the author of many books.

During the war, Dr. Shuster was a member of the general advisory committee of the Division of Cultural Relations of the Department of State, and a member of Enemy Alien Board No. 2

The fact that there are defects and the fact that there are failures does not prove the wrongness of the goals toward which we are striving. The fact that occasionally a baby soils its garments doesn't mean that we throw away the baby. We change the garments. (*Laughter and applause*)

Mr. Taft: I just want to add that the Church is the major institution, the major group, which has given the most intelligent answer to the problem of persons that tried to reconcile those two inconsistencies of which you just spoke. It's given an answer which has brought the adherence of the great souls down through the centuries; it has given them some answer to the problem of evil. I'd like to know yours.

Mr. Denny: Thank you. The young man in the aisle.

Man: Dr. Shuster, can a religion which is organized in an undemocratic fashion advance democracy?

Dr. Shuster: Well, I don't know that there is one. You are probably referring to the Catholic Church; at least I shall temporarily assume that that is the case.

Now, I'd like to say on that subject that we are sometimes appalled by the extent to which the Lord is democratic, because there is only one person, who is truly singled out, who is truly aristocratic in our midst, and that person is the Saint.

Curiously enough, if you look around our society of recent years, you will discover that the Saints have not come from the bankers and the presidents and the professors and the college presidents, etc., but they've been picked out in the most curious fashion: a little girl down in the Pyrennes, a Negro in the West Indies, a school girl in Italy, an Italian nun in New York, etc. As a matter of fact, if you look over the whole crowd, there isn't really one respectable person in terms of the bourgeoisie among them.

As I said before, that gives the Lord a pretty good democratic record, and I think that, on the whole, we ought to be on His side in this matter. (*Laughter and applause*)

Mr. Denny: Mr. Taft would like to comment on that.

Mr. Taft: Without referring to the institution to which the question evidently did refer, it raises a major question as to how you get democracy in an administrative organization, and that is a very fundamental question. Mr. Denny and I argued vigorously about that at lunch. I tried to answer it a little bit in my speech. You can have democracy if you have real participation and some humility in a sense of his own fallibility in the boss. (*Applause*)

Mr. Denny: Thank you. Next question.

Man: I'd like to ask my question of Dr. Glueck. Do you not

think that if we were struggling for a common goal in peacetime as in wartime it would be possible to organize successfully?

*Dr. Glueck:* I think we can try to hope to organize successfully, and that's a goal that we must hold to strengthen us. Whether or not we can guarantee immediately, in advance, success for what we are trying to get is another matter, but I am convinced that, unless we do try with all our hearts and souls and might, we never will get anywhere, and therefore let's try. (*Applause*)

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you. Next question.

*Man:* Mr. Taft, if democracy and religion have advanced so well together, what caused the backsliding in Germany and Russia?

*Mr. Taft:* Well, there are various kinds of religion. The Orthodox Church in Russia and the Lutheran and Evangelical Churches in Germany had gotten into a pietistic kind of religion that took you away from everyday life.

Religion certainly has to take place in connection with all activities of life, or it cannot give the answer that we've tried to tonight.

*Mr. Denny:* Thank you, Mr. Taft, Dr. Shuster, and Dr. Glueck, for your very stimulating and useful answers. Now, in a moment, I'll tell you about our subject and speakers for next week.

*Announcer:* For nearly fifteen years, through more than 600 broadcasts, America's Town Meeting of the Air has provided radio listeners with a platform for mature evaluation of the problems that face mankind. Your Town Meeting has given exposure to the ideas and opinions that shape our destiny in national and world affairs.

Thanks to the speakers who have the courage of their convictions, and thanks to you, our listeners, for your loyalty and continued interest, Town Meeting has become an essential part of the American way of life.

As we approach our 15th anniversary on the air, you can help perpetuate the ideals and purposes on which America's Town Meeting was founded. As a regular listener, you can suggest to us the subjects which are of most concern to you. You can organize discussion groups in your home, church, and school. If you are a businessman and civic leader, you can sponsor these broadcasts on your local ABC station.

Now, to tell you about next week's program, here is Mr. Denny.

*Mr. Denny:* What kind of education and by whom should it be provided? Next week, when we will be the guests of Illinois Wesleyan University and the *Daily Pantagraph* of Bloomington,



Illinois, our subject will be, "What Should We Do About Federal Aid to Education?"

Our speakers will be: Senator Scott W. Lucas, Democrat of Illinois and an alumnus of Illinois Wesleyan, and Dr. Laurence M. Gould, president of Carleton College.

The following week, March 28, from Peoria, Illinois, we will turn to the controversial farm problem with the question, "What



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Kind of Farm Program Do We Need?" Our speakers will be Congressman Wright Patman, Democrat of Texas, and Allan B. Kline, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Copies of tonight's Town Meeting and all Town Meetings will be found in our Town Meeting Bulletin which you may receive regularly for 11 weeks by sending \$1 to Town Hall, New York 18, New York. Single copies are 10 cents each.

So plan to be with us next week and every week at the sound of the Crier's bell.